

The Never-Ending Street

examining personal and networked street photography



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Submitted as a folio of creative work and thesis for the degree of Master of Creative Arts, University of Technology Sydney, 2019

Certificate of Original Authorship

I, Steve Macdonald, declare that this thesis, is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Creative Arts, in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology Sydney.

This thesis is wholly my own work unless otherwise reference or acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

This document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

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Steve Macdonald 2019

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To quote Dr Chris Caines, all other omissions, errors and mistakes remain, humbly, my own.

Format

The Never-Ending Street is a Master of Creative Arts (Research) project with two parts:

1. A practice-based creative work, *Street Series*.
2. A 20,000-word written exegesis entitled *The Never-Ending Street*.

The two parts are complementary and can be read and viewed in either order.

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Abstract

We produce, share, and view more photos than any previous generation. At the time of writing there are 3.3 billion active smartphones in the world, with more than two billion photos uploaded daily. How does this mass-amateurisation of visual media challenge our understanding of photography? How do we make sense of these overwhelming changes?

The Never-Ending Street focuses its gaze on one aspect of this expanding 'new galaxy' of personal photography—the contemporary form of amateur street photography. The central question is how is the practice of amateur street photography shaped by both past traditions and recent newer networked practices?

Street photography has boomed in the past decade at an unprecedented rate, amplified by networked imaging practices and networked audiences. This research proposes the contemporary form of street practice as an unfolding set of negotiations with past histories, technical routines and shifting aesthetic concerns adapting to recent imaging technologies and associated photographic practices. It argues the aesthetic lineage of these practices lie with a handful of canonical practitioners from the mid to late 20th century who developed not just the visual language but also the behaviours of performance and subject interaction that define the genre. This study identifies an emerging hybrid design-orientated aesthetic that is colonising many street photography image-sharing platforms.

This Creative Masters project proposes the study of vernacular photographic practice itself as a necessary addition to photographic studies and explores new directions that understand personal networked street photography as a series of practices extending beyond the content of the image.